

# CORRESPONDENCE

## Mendelian Inheritance of Mental Deficiency

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—The July number of the *EUGENICS REVIEW* contains a report by Miss E. I. Corry, of the Conference on Amentia held under the auspices of the Central Association for Mental Welfare in December 1932, at which I was asked to open a discussion on the inheritance of mental deficiency. It is stated that I was "challenged on all sides and received no support for this theory" of the Mendelian inheritance of mental deficiency. Such a statement can only be regarded as very misleading and prejudicial to progress in a true understanding of mental inheritance, which presumably we all seek. The audience was not composed of authorities on mental inheritance, so that whether the expressed views were accepted (and they were certainly in part, although somewhat unwillingly, accepted) or otherwise was not of great consequence.

I intentionally confined my remarks mainly to Goddard's now somewhat antiquated results as an illustration of the Mendelian point of view, and they were put forward with a certain amount of diffidence and misgiving because I had not at that time gone very fully into the more recent literature of the subject. The address was intended as a general introduction to the nature of Mendelian inheritance in man for those who were unfamiliar with the subject, rather than as a critical proof of such inheritance in any particular case, although it was afterwards admitted that amaurotic idiocy at any rate is inherited as a recessive Mendelian difference.

Lest it should be supposed that the Mendelian inheritance of mental defect is on an insecure basis, such as was undoubtedly the case some years ago, I may say that I have since had occasion to look up the recent literature, in connection with evidence given before the Government Committee on Mental Defect. One can only conclude that much recent work, especially in Sweden and Germany, has notably strengthened the case for Mendelian inheritance of various mental and nervous defects. A paper reviewing the evidence on this subject will shortly appear in the *British Journal of Medical Psychology*.

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## Nazi Anti-Jewish Policy

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I entirely agree with you in condemning Hitler's persecution of the Jews, but the reason you give seems to me fallacious. In your July issue you say :

"Herr Hitler has still not realized, apparently, that in declaring that the small number of Jews in Germany have achieved an altogether disproportionate measure of success—in the arts, sciences, and learned professions—he has publicly acknowledged their superiority to the bulk of the nation that wishes to get rid of them!"

If you will read Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, you will find that he fully understands your argument, but does not agree with it. One of his principal charges against the Jews is that in literature and the arts they succeed by superficial and meretricious qualities, and not by first-rate work.

The distinction is familiar to every competent critic. Everybody knows the difference between a best-seller and a literary masterpiece. Edgar Wallace sold far better than John Galsworthy. Hall Caine left many times as much money as Thomas Hardy. Martin Tupper was beyond comparison a more successful poet than Robert Browning.

The same thing is true of all the arts. The greatest musical composers were pure Germans, but the works of the Jew Mendelssohn have sold far better than those of Bach and Beethoven. The greatest painters are hardly ever the most popular.

I cannot speak with authority about science, but I have heard such contempt expressed for scientific knights and newspaper scientists, that I strongly suspect that the same principle applies.

I do not know whether Hitler is correct in his remarks about the Jews. He does, however, make a distinction between value and success which would have the unanimous support of intelligent critics.

R. B. KERR.

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Croydon.

Mr. Kerr may be assured that the distinction between value and success, which he rightly says is familiar to intelligent persons, was not overlooked in the paragraph to which he has taken exception. But it is to be regretted that to illustrate his own argument he should have chosen just those categories of achievement—namely, literature, music, and art—that are least susceptible to evaluation by objective standards. In the sciences, however, in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and medicine, for example, judgment can rest on a solid basis of ascertained and verifiable fact; and in these realms the supreme achievement of such men as Einstein, Böhr, Michelson, Ehrlich, Hertz, Willstätter, Haber, and Carrel, is hardly a subject for dispute.—ED.

## Eugenics and Religion

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—The incursion of ministers of religion into things scientific is usually unfortunate, since few of them have a proper knowledge of the science of which they speak. They have, however, some excuse since hundreds of thousands of persons look